

Canadian
Advisory Council
on the Status of Women



Conseil
consultatif canadien
sur la situation de la femme

**CACSW RESPONSE TO:
A REVIEW OF THE CANADIAN JOBS STRATEGY,
THE SECOND REPORT OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION**

July 25, 1988



The Second Report of the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, *A Review of the Canadian Jobs Strategy*, is structured into six general categories for the purpose of analysis and recommendations. These categories are: Introduction; Program Objectives; Program Eligibility; Program Administration; Communication and Planning; and Expenditures. This review by the CACSW follows the framework of the Report, outlining selected recommendations within the general categories and the Council's response.

I. Report: Introduction — The need for a comprehensive employment strategy

The Report emphasizes the need to consider employment needs in the context of the development of a labour market policy and broad industrial strategy.

CACSW Response

In general, the CACSW supports this view. Many women's groups have called for a comprehensive women's employment strategy in recognition of structural inequities in employment, and the short- and long-term consequences for women's employment which will result from technological change and the Canada-United States Trade Agreement. Although the CACSW has not directly called for a comprehensive women's employment strategy, its collected recommendations on the economic situation of women, job creation and training, employment equity, pay equity, free trade, etc., effectively support such a position. The Canadian Jobs Strategy (CJS) should be viewed in the context of a need for a comprehensive women's employment strategy. Piecemeal, disjunctive efforts will not measurably improve the situation for women.

II. Report: Program Objectives

■ Private Sector Emphasis on Training

The Report makes several recommendations in relation to "Private Sector Emphasis on Training", including job creation, quality of training, and institutional training. In particular, the Standing Committee received evidence indicating that some participants are receiving job-specific training in low-level skills, and therefore recommended that subsidized training be restricted to employers who provide portable skill training, and that uniform criteria be developed to assess training programs. (R-2.1.2.1)

CACSW Response

The concern with quality of training is endorsed by the Council. CACSW Recommendation A1.4 (see Appendix) stresses the need for training programs which provide women with skills which are transferable to other job settings.

However, quality of training is but one part of the picture. We agree with the Committee that criteria must be developed to determine and assess eligible training; however, this criteria must be responsive to the real life needs of potential participants and must acknowledge the support and training required by program providers. For example, training programs which would successfully provide women with transferable skills must incorporate bridging components such as child-care assistance, transportation assistance, support in coping with personal crisis, confidence building, student advocacy and life-skills instruction. This is particularly important for disadvantaged, immigrant, and refugee women. Organizations working with women in these circumstances have called for the inclusion of these components in all Job Entry/Re-entry and Job Development training programs.

In addition, we should acknowledge that program coordinators, particularly those in the private sector, would benefit from training in the basic principles of adult education, the objectives and requirements of the CJS, and non-sexist program design and instruction.

Finally, Canada Employment Centres must have or be prepared to hire personnel who are trained and experienced in the evaluation of training programs to ensure that measures to improve the quality of training have a reasonable chance of success.

■ Local Advisory Councils (LACs)

The Report makes a number of recommendations to improve the effectiveness of Local Advisory Councils, including the need for LACs to have an opportunity to provide "real input" into the administration of the CJS, a regular reporting structure, and a representative structure to include "equal representation among organizations representing employers and workers, and non-aligned groups and individuals". (R-2.3.3 to 2.3.6)

CACSW Response

Unfortunately, the Report does not provide a statistical breakdown of gender, group representation, or of the regions in which LACs operate. Of 258 LACs approved, only 158 are in operation and, of the 2,500 individuals who make up LACs, 35% represent employers, 42% represent workers, 8% represent organized labour, and the remaining 15% represent women's groups, youth groups, Aboriginal organizations, etc. This suggests that the Council's October 1985 recommendation that "the membership of each LAC consist of equal numbers of women and men, including representatives of women's groups" has probably not been implemented.

Therefore, the Council would suggest that Standing Committee Recommendation R-2.3.6 be amended to incorporate a requirement for gender parity in keeping with the Council's recommendation.

Generally, the Council believes that LACs potentially have a great deal to contribute to the effectiveness of job training programs. But, they must have a committed and representative membership and have an opportunity for "real input" into program priorities and administration. Recommendations R-2.3.4 and 2.3.5 would establish a regular reporting structure which we believe will assist in achieving these objectives.

■ Duration of Training

The Report documented the concern of many witnesses about the inadequate duration of training provided, particularly in relation to Job Development and Job Entry programs, and the difficulties associated with the reduction of maximum training periods for participants who have been involved in other job training activities. The Report recommends that longer training periods be available, particularly in relation to Job Development and Job Entry, and that the full training period be available to all program participants, without reductions for "time spent". (R-2.4.1 and 2.4.2)

CACSW Response

Job Development and Job Entry are the programs with the highest participation of women. The CACSW agrees that the training period must be adequate to ensure the successful acquisition of skills with long-term benefits for women, and therefore agrees that longer training periods should be available and that reductions in maximum training periods for "time spent" should be eliminated in order to accomplish this objective.

■ Basic Upgrading

The Report identifies a serious and widespread concern that potential CJS participants are excluded because they lack literacy skills and/or are in need of basic academic upgrading. The Report recommends that federal-provincial discussions on a cost-shared program to address illiteracy, functional illiteracy,

and basic upgrading begin as soon as possible, that more funds be allocated to basic upgrading under Job Development and Entry/Re-entry programs, that funding for language training be increased, that unemployment insurance claimants be eligible for benefits at the beginning of a claim while developing basic skills, and that training-related allowances not be deducted from social assistance payments. (R-2.5.1 to 2.5.4)

CACSW Response

The CACSW does not have formal policy to address all of these recommendations. However, the Council has acknowledged the central importance for women of providing basic upgrading and can endorse Recommendation R-2.5.2.

A major concern of groups attuned to the need for basic education among Canadian adults is the increasing shift of focus away from institutional academic upgrading and skill development toward employment training. Job Entry/Re-entry and Job Development are specifically aimed at the under-educated, unskilled and unemployed, but provide little time for upgrading in reading, writing and math. These groups argue that training periods are too short generally, but particularly for learning basic skills which are necessary to prepare adult students for entry into employment training. They believe that skill training without basic adult education will severely limit women's job market possibilities, and suggest that education upgrading should be made an integral part of Job Entry/Re-entry and Job Development courses.

Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women,
The Canadian Jobs Strategy: Current Issues for Women
(Ottawa: February 1987), page 17.

In addition, the Council has been told of the problems encountered by social assistance recipients, and can support a change to the policy raised by Recommendation 2.5.4.

The practice of provincial governments of deducting training allowances from social assistance benefits makes it extremely difficult for the neediest women to take training. Several groups have recommended there be federal-provincial negotiations on this issue, and that the training allowance be raised to at least the provincial minimum wage.

CACSW, *The Canadian Jobs Strategy*, page 18.

Unfortunately, the Report does not acknowledge the importance of language training for women's participation in job training. The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund has publicly announced that women are severely disadvantaged by gender bias in federal government language training policies, and is planning legal action to challenge them. CJS evaluation must take into account whether federal government language training policies enhance women's opportunities for participation in job training.

■ Apprenticeship Training/Target Group Participation

The Report raises two major concerns related to apprenticeship training under the Skill Shortages Program: the training does not reflect labour market conditions, and the fact that of 42,000 apprentices (excluding drycleaning and hairdressing), less than 1% are women. The Report recommends funding be increased to improve target group participation in non-traditional occupations requiring apprenticeship training, and that funding be restricted to occupations in which there is a need for workers.

The Report raises general concerns about target group participation and, in particular, the failure to attract women to non-traditional areas of training. The Report recommends that CEIC actively search out members of target groups, provide counselling and information, develop local targets where possible, include older workers as target groups, involve Native groups in identifying appropriate training programs, and provide minority language instruction. In addition, the Report recommends that CEIC develop an outreach program to encourage women to enrol in training for non-traditional skills, that administrators in programs and colleges accommodate more women in these programs, and that dependant care allowances reflect the real cost of child care. (R-2.7.1. to 2.7.8)

CACSW Response

For some time, the Council has been concerned about the severe under-representation of women in the Skill Shortages program and the general occupational focus of training provided to women under the CJS. We are pleased that the Report acknowledges the important role of information and counselling in attracting women to non-traditional skills development programs; however, there are many specific suggestions which should be considered. For example, the availability of role models is an important influence. Contact with women working in non-traditional areas and the use of women instructors and coordinators would undoubtedly encourage potential participant and encourage those in programs to continue their participation. Are these measures in place to encourage the participation of women? Frequently, potential participants have been in abusive situations and are reluctant to work in a predominantly male environment. Programs, and by implication, outreach efforts, must be responsive to these "real life" situations. Are women provided with the opportunity to undertake training in teams, or groups, so that they are not isolated in non-traditional work environments? The concept of critical mass may have important implications for CJS program design and success. We suggest that these concerns would be acknowledged by instructors familiar with good adult education practice.

The Council welcomes the Recommendations in the Report which call for outreach and a pro-active approach to the participation of women in the CJS. However, we do believe that structural incentives must be developed, that bridging assistance of the kind identified earlier, and program follow-up, are integral components of any recipe for success.

It is unfortunate that the Report does not include data about the gender breakdown of all target groups, or the occupational focus of the training provided. The current participation rate of women in Skill Shortages is unacceptable and specific measures must be undertaken to improve the situation. For the CJS overall, the Council has found that training for women is generally oriented toward traditional occupations and offers little promise of employment.

The Council's information is now dated (1986), but the Report suggests our earlier sketch of the occupational focus of training is still true.

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women of Newfoundland and Labrador reports that 4 of 11 Re-entry programs in Newfoundland teach office skills; there are 4000 unemployed clerical workers in the province. The four Re-entry projects in Saint John, New Brunswick are training 77 women in homemaking, clerical and word processing occupations. Of the 10 Job Entry projects in Saint John, 6 offer training in sales, food services industries and hospitality; the other 4 offer training in light manufacturing, warehousing in food industries, child-care cooks and cooking. In Toronto, all except one of 16 Re-entry programs were in sales, clerical services and health occupations. In the British Columbia/Yukon region, 36% of the training positions filled by women in the Job Development program were in clerical, sales and service occupations. Of 20 Re-entry projects approved for the B.C./Yukon region, nearly all of them are related to office skills and clerical occupations. This finding also holds true for the Ontario and Manitoba projects approved under Job Entry/Re-entry. . . . A large portion of women currently unemployed (55%) worked in sales, service and clerical occupations.

CACSW, *The Canadian Jobs Strategy*, page 15.

The Council strongly supports the recommendation for dependant care allowances which reflect the real cost of child care, but is disappointed by its low profile in the Report and the absence of any substantive discussion of the critical role of child care in women's employment, both generally and in relation to the CJS. It is true that funding for child care must reflect its true cost. However, we must first be able to find good quality child-care. The current crisis caused by the shortage of licensed home and child-care spaces is well documented and is itself a significant structural barrier to women's employment. We believe this should be acknowledged as an essential contextual element in any discussion of employment strategies.

III. Report: Program Eligibility

The Report considers program eligibility criteria to be too restrictive, inflexible, and at times arbitrarily administered. The Report recommends: that the "24 out of 30" rule be waived for at least 10% of participants in Job Development; that it be waived completely in regions where unemployment exceeds one and one-half times the national average; that the "three year out" rule for Job Re-entry be waived and the requirement that women be primarily involved in homemaking eliminated; that women who have sought full-time employment for two years, but have only found part-time employment be eligible for Job Re-entry; and that skill designations for Skill Shortages have more local focus. The Report makes several recommendations for the Community Futures program, particularly for Aboriginal Communities. (R-3.1 to 3.8)

CACSW Response

If implemented, the Report's recommendations in relation to Job Re-entry and Job Development would partially meet the Council's concern that the current eligibility criteria exclude many women who are most in need of training: women who cannot afford three years out of the work force to care for young children, women who are marginally employed in low-paying jobs, and recently unemployed or new Canadians. These recommendations should be supported and changes announced by the federal government in March 1988 should be monitored. However, the Report does not consider the eligibility criteria for Job Entry, which the Council believes also requires more flexibility. Eligibility criteria should be based on need.

IV. Report: Program Administration

The Report raises problems with project approval, payment of allowances, and project monitoring. In particular, the Report recommends that a new monitoring system proposed by the Task Force on Canadian Jobs Strategy

Delivery be abandoned and current monitoring activities be enhanced. (R-4.1.1 to 4.3.2)

CACSW Response

Any measures which increase administrative responsiveness are welcome. In particular, recommendation 4.3.1 should be supported. The Task Force proposes to do away with on-site visits except in the case of "problematic sites". However, the evidence suggests that monitoring needs to be tightened to ensure that the quality and objectives of the programs are achieved. The Report overlooks a very important reason to support regular on-site visits: these visits provide legitimacy and encouragement for the community and program participants. Each visit provides an opportunity for project officers to better understand who CJS clients are and what is needed. There is some concern in the community that there has been a subtle shift in emphasis from client needs to statistics gathering and budget justification. On-site visits, indeed personal concern by project officers about the progress of programs and participants, convey the message to both the community and participants that this effort is important and worth pursuing; that it matters. Therefore, visits are important for both administrative and program reasons and should be encouraged rather than restricted.

V. Report: Communication and Planning

The Report raises concerns about a lack of communication between the various constituencies involved in the CJS, and the inability to plan over the medium and long term due to funding processes. (R-5.1 to 5.3)

CACSW Response

It is the Council's view that the federal government's commitment to job training must be an ongoing, permanent effort. The CJS should be designed and funded with more than a short-term perspective, and this necessarily involves accommodation of long-term planning needs and multi-year

programs. As a result, the Council would generally support the Report in its concern for long-term planning and multi-year programs.

VI. Report: Expenditures

The Report emphasizes the need to view job training separately from the question of rates of unemployment, and that funding should be adjusted to accommodate labour displacement resulting from the free trade agreement.

CACSW Response

The Council supports the view that job training be examined from the perspective of structural disadvantages to employment for women, and not simply as a response to unemployment. Women face unemployment, but also under-employment and marginal employment. As a result, the Council agrees that job training measures, including the CJS, not be tied to unemployment levels.

The Council is also concerned about the impact of the free trade agreement. We are advised that the CJS currently is not sufficiently funded, at least not sufficiently funded to meet the priorities as women have identified them. The Council recommends that any labour adjustment program designed to accommodate a free trade agreement:

- accommodate the unique needs of female workers;
- have eligibility criteria designed to include all workers displaced from industries as a result of trade liberalization adjustments;
- be generous, flexible, and easily accessible to all workers;
- not be limited to the effects predicted by an economic model but be open to all affected workers;
- not stop at offering retraining programs, but also offer funds to help relocate;

- offer child-care services or assistance in finding and paying for child-care services for displaced workers entering retraining programs;
- be monitored in an ongoing way with feedback from the public and special interest groups, and be able to adapt to expressed needs;
- use non-sexist methodologies and employ women who are knowledgeable about women's issues in its design, implementation, and monitoring phases.

In conclusion, the Council commends the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, *A Review of the Canadian Jobs Strategy*, for its thoroughness and identification of major training issues. The Canadian Jobs Strategy has the potential to address the training needs of women in Canada to the benefit of the Canadian economy, women, and families. We trust our comments on the Standing Committee's report are helpful in moving in this direction.

Job Creation and Training Policies

A1.4

Canadian Jobs Strategy December 1986

Whereas

- the CACSW's study of the impact of the Canadian Jobs Strategy (CJS) on women reveals that: women are severely under-represented in the Skill Shortages program; the majority of women receive training in the traditional female and lower-paying clerical, sales and service occupations; training programs often do not meet the specific needs of women trainees by providing transferrable skills, as well as basic educational upgrading and bridging assistance (i.e., personal counselling, life skills, etc.) as required; and the eligibility criteria rule out many women who want and need training;
- training programs are crucial to women if they are to maintain or improve their position in the labour market in that new technology and/or a free trade agreement between Canada and the United States could result in major displacements of women workers in certain occupational sectors;

the CACSW recommends that Employment and Immigration Canada evaluate the CJS from the perspective of improving the long- and short-term employment outlook for Canadian women, with reference to the following specific questions:

- (a) are women participating in the Skill Shortages program at levels which reflect their labour force participation in these occupations;
- (b) are women being encouraged to enter more non-traditional and higher-paying occupational fields;
- (c) are training programs providing bridging assistance for women, particularly for those who are employment-disadvantaged, to allow them to successfully complete their courses;
- (d) are training programs providing adequate basic adult education or upgrading as required by many women to allow them to move into job skills training;
- (e) are training programs providing women with skills which are transferrable to other job settings, thereby increasing their employment options;
- (f) are women benefitting equally from the activities undertaken within the Innovations and Community Futures programs?